Ike and USIA, a Symposium, Copyright 1998

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Information Series

IKE AND USIA, A SYMPOSIUM

Edited by: Hans N. Tuch and G. Lewis Schmidt

Preface

In commemoration of ex-President Dwight D. Eisenhower's 100th birthday in October 1990, the U.S. Information Agency Alumni Association (USIAAA) and the Public Diplomacy Foundation, both of Washington, D.C., sponsored a symposium and dinner on October 11, 1990 to recall the President's creation of the U.S. Information Agency and his interest throughout his presidency in what is now called public diplomacy.

His executive order establishing USIA in 1953 was one of the President's first acts of reorganizing the U.S. Government after his election because, as he said so often, it was of utmost importance to the nation that the United States government communicate with foreign publics and effectively tell America's story abroad.

The commemorative event took place at Fort McNair in Washington, D.C.—the symposium in the Arnold auditorium of the National Defense University, and the dinner and subsequent program at the Officers Club. It brought together retired veterans and current staffers and spouses of USIA and related organizations involved in the U.S. Government's public diplomacy. Many of those who attended served in USIA here and abroad during the Eisenhower presidency.

Abbott Washburn, who had been Deputy Director of the U.S. Information Agency during the entire period of the Eisenhower administration, served as host and moderator of the evening's program.

This short volume records the prepared remarks of those who took part in the symposium, Ike and USIA, and in the after-dinner discussion. They were Burnett Anderson, James Halsema, Hans Tuch, Barry Zorthian—all retired USIA foreign service officers who served in the Agency during the 1950s; Henry Loomis, former director of Voice of America and deputy director of USIA; Frank Shakespeare and James Keogh, former directors of USIA.

Appreciation is due those who helped make the evening possible—Peter Brescia, Fred Coffey, Cliff Groce, Mim Johnston, Robert Lincoln, Jack O'Brien, Lew Schmidt, Abbott and Wanda Washburn.

The Editors

Introduction by Abbott Washburn

When we who had worked on Ike's 1952 campaign staff came to Washington with the President, Stalin was still alive. The Cold War was at its most frigid. One of the first things the President did was appoint the Jackson Committee to study the Cold War, to talk with everybody who knew anything about it, and to make recommendations to him. I was assigned as executive secretary of the Jackson Committee by C.D. Jackson, the special assistant to the President for psychological operations. Wanda, my wife, was also on the Committee staff, as was Henry Loomis. The Committee labored for about 6 months in a historic old house on the corner of 16th and Eye, NW, now torn down.

Eisenhower had faith in psychological and information activities because he was convinced they had shortened WWII and saved lives. As the new President, he found himself in a “battle for men's minds”. From the Jackson Committee he wanted a plan and

structure that would start to win the battle for men's minds. Few diplomats, he felt, were good at these kinds of operations, and Secretary Dulles agreed with him.

The top-secret Jackson Committee report made numerous recommendations for improving our conduct of the Cold War. But it did not recommend a new agency for international propaganda and related activities. Eisenhower himself, however, was convinced that what was needed was an organization of experts—something like those who had staffed the Office of War Information. He acted on the recommendations of C.D. Jackson and Nelson Rockefeller and established the USIA by Executive Order in the summer of 1953.

The next thing was to find a Director for the Agency. I don't know whether or not C.D. knew Ted Streibert, the former head of the Mutual Broadcasting System who was then serving on Jim Conant's staff at HICOG in Germany (Dr. James Conant, U.S. High Commissioner for Germany). But C.D. ended up recommending him to the President. Ike asked C.D. to ask Jim whether we could have Ted. (That's a little sidelight on how DDE operated—it was not an order but “ask Jim if he could spare Streibert.”)

When Ted arrived, we knew he was the right man, a tough hard-worker who knew what had to be done. I went over to the Agency as his Deputy and as liaison with the White House.

Ed Schechter (former USIA colleague) sent me a recent note on how it looked from the other end. He was at HICOG, having helped set up RIAS in Berlin—Radio in the American Sector—and having dealt with Messrs. Roy Cohn and David Schine, as did “Tom” Tuch (Hans Tuch, former USIA colleague) who was also in Germany then. Ed wrote:

...I was stationed in Bonn and Streibert was sent by the Eisenhower administration as a sort of “Super PAO” to look at the giant information outfit in Germany... I happened to be Chief of the Radio Branch for the American Zone and since Streibert came from a radio background he was particularly interested in this field. Thus, I came to know him quite well

during the 3 months or so of his stay and we got along very well indeed. Eventually, he did confide that he would be nominated as USIA Director. People used to say that Streibert had “ice in his veins.” Maybe—but at that time, with an organization quite confused and a bit shattered by Cohn and Schine, he was in my opinion an excellent choice.

We took our policy guidance from the State Department. But the Agency reported directly to the President, who took a keen interest in its operations. He wanted to see us on a regular basis, whether or not we had particular problems to discuss with him. Often Ted would take other agency officials over to the White House for these meetings. You can imagine what this did for morale!

The President also wanted the world opinion factor to be cranked in to NSC meetings when decision-options were being discussed. He put us at the table at the NSC where we could speak up without being first asked what we thought or what data we had. (Previously, in the back row as observers, we could not do this.) Often he would ask us direct questions, e.g. “If we landed Marines in Lebanon, what would the public reaction be? How would the news media react over there?”

He always listened intently, patiently. He always wanted the best intelligence. He was always receptive to ideas, even though he might not agree in the end. So you can see why he liked our opinion polls in other countries. They gave him an added dimension. Henry Loomis (former Director of VOA and Deputy Director of USIA) spoke with him about this, and will report on that later.

Foster Dulles (Secretary of State) was against the polls. One day he called Henry and me over to his office, saying that they were an intrusion, an embarrassment to him, and made the conduct of foreign affairs more difficult. Henry was in charge of polling at that time.

We did not discontinue the polling, as you know. Toward the end of the Eisenhower administration, the polls showed some disapproval of U.S. policies, thus giving rise to the “prestige polls” issue in the 1960 Nixon/Kennedy election campaign. The Democrats

argued that under Eisenhower/Nixon American prestige had plummeted overseas. In the middle of this, Oren Stephens, who headed Research for us, phoned me in a state of turmoil. Oren was from Arkansas and his family had known the Fulbrights for a long time. He said that Senator Fulbright had just got him on the phone and demanded that he send the latest opinion polls up to the Hill. He stalled as long as he could until the Senator said, “Well, are you going to do it?” I said to Oren, “What did you tell him?” Oren replied, “I said, 'Senator, I have to go to the bathroom, I'll call you back'!”

That was a phony issue in the campaign. Our overall prestige abroad was as good as ever. Another phony issue was the so-called “missile gap.” The President knew from the U-2 intelligence-gathering cameras that there was no missile gap. He could have disclosed the whole thing publicly, but he didn't in order to protect the operation. This is also a sidelight on how he operated. Politics were secondary. In the 1956 presidential campaign, for example, he did little campaigning because the larger problems of the Suez crisis and the Hungarian rebellion were on his front burner. He said that if this lost him the election, so be it.

Two other examples of his receptiveness:

1. I wrote a memo to him via Ted Streibert in early 1955, suggesting a “President's Program” to encourage personal contact by average American citizens with their counterparts in other countries. He liked this from the beginning, discussed it with usthoroughly. It was while on his hospital bed in Denver, recovering from the heart attack, that he decided to name it “People to People”. He called the White House People-to-People conference in September, 1956.

2. I wrote another memo to him on the world-opinion hole we would be digging for ourselves if we should ever again use atomic weapons on the Asia mainland. This was when a preemptive strike was being considered against the Chinese troops massed opposite the islands of Quemoy and Matsu. Tactical nuclear weapons were to be used. He

responded with a personal letter, which may still be classified at Abilene. I think my letter may have been useful to him in determining to reject the recommendations of the military. He did this a total of 5 times, according to historian Bill Ewald. It shows his forbearance, patience, and his determination to work through crises without the use of military force, especially nuclear weapons. He warned the hawks that anything we started with such weapons would likely escalate into an unthinkable global disaster.

—

Eisenhower predicted the upheaval in Eastern Europe which we saw last year. But he thought it would happen a lot sooner. If we stayed strong, he held, and kept preaching and demonstrating the advantages of human rights, freedom and democracy, the Communists would eventually see their system as fundamentally flawed and it would go down. He regarded the Cold War as a kind of aberration. He saw our work as important in demonstrating the advantages of democracy and freedom.

I am going to stop at this point and call on some of the operators. Barry Zorthian was program manager of the Voice at that period, and later went on to other important assignments. Barry, would you talk a bit about the VOA.

Remarks by Barry Zorthian

Abbott has given you a very good picture of the big picture. Let me talk a little on the operational level. I assure you that at that level, our contacts with President Eisenhower and the administration were fairly limited, but nevertheless, the influence and the follow-through were definitely felt. I'd say the Eisenhower years for the Voice of America, in an overall summary, was a period of the coming of age, the maturing of the Voice of America, the transformation from a political instrument growing out of World War II into a legitimate radio operation, obviously with an ultimate political purpose, but nevertheless, with the tone and approach and trappings, if you will, of a very legitimate worldwide radio network.

I don't mean all problems were solved, but nevertheless, the right direction, the right courses were set.

It is important in evaluating those years for the Voice, I think, to look at the background. My own involvement in the Voice started in 1947. Most of the personnel then were still World War II personnel who had been recruited during the war. There was some new personnel, but essentially we were still operating on the basis of a very competent, a very knowledgeable staff that had been put together during the war.

In the Eisenhower years, I had the good fortune of being at the center of VOA operations. I was chief of the new central news branch until 1955, then policy officer—I think the title was assistant program manager for policy—for a year, and then program manager for most of the second term, from 1957 through 1961. In those various roles, I was involved in changing and trying to adjust the direction of the Voice.

In the late 40s, we were at the peak of the Cold War. The Iron Curtain had come down, later the Korean war started. The general atmosphere was a period of intense growth of anti-communism, a very emotional, almost a one-dimensional approach, and that was reflected in the Voice's output. It was a political output. The tone was pretty strident. The policy direction was very strongly anti-communist in its most negative implications. The personnel were not, by and large—obviously there were exceptions—professional communicators or professional radio personnel. They tended to be political people, most of them emigres during World War II or shortly before or shortly thereafter, with strong ties to their homelands.

The “plus” on this was the intensity of the operation, the commitment of that personnel, to the task at hand. The controls were strong. We were a definite part of the nation's foreign policy operations. Our directors were foreign policy officers, the most notable ones being Charlie Thayer and Foy Kohler. We had policy officers assigned to us from the State

Department with the specific task of controlling the Voice, trying to make sure its political output was in the right tone, in keeping with State Department policy.

We also were going through a period of “Why can't we sell democracy? Here we can sell soap so effectively. Let's put all we know about advertising soap to selling overseas, and we'll get them all very actively marching in two-step toward Jeffersonian democracy.” The world, obviously, didn't operate quite that way.

We had periods of intense arguments with policy direction from the State Department: news being left out, commentaries being harsh. We used to have some extremely harsh commentaries; those of you who remember Howard Maier may recall some of his output. There was some English broadcasting, but no doubt the emphasis was on East Europe and the Soviet Union. We added some of the Soviet Union languages during that period. News was the choice of the individual desks. There was a good deal of conflict—tension, if you will—between central operations and the language desks.

This was the period, up to November 1952, of the Eisenhower-Stevenson election campaign. One of the criticisms of the Voice at that time was that the personnel tended to be Democratic. Not particularly surprising. We had just gone through sixteen years of Democratic administrations. The thought of a Republican administration coming in probably was against the instincts of most of that personnel. I remember specifically we were criticized on election night of 1952 for not being enthusiastic enough in the central news room about the Eisenhower victory. And that was thrown in our face many times thereafter.

Eisenhower years, 1953 and onwards. Not a very auspicious start. The Voice faced [Senator Joseph] McCarthy, and it was a devastating period for the Voice. That challenge to the Voice, domination of the Voice, disruption of the Voice by Joe McCarthy and those who supported him started before the election in late '52. It focused on the Voice in early '53, shortly after the new administration came into power. At the working level, the

impression we had at the Voice was that we were out on our own. John Foster Dulles indicated he wanted nothing to do with this strange institution up in New York. (Editor's Note: VOA was located in New York until 1954.) President Eisenhower was having his own problems in handling McCarthy.

Joe McCarthy, with the help of an internal network of supporters, almost tore the Voice apart. We literally had two suicides, if I remember; reputations were damaged; the operation was filled with tension, filled with personnel conflicts, staff suspicions. We had very little leadership. In our revolving door at that time, we had a fellow named Doc Morton, who was director of the Voice, who literally refused to come out of his office for fear of getting into trouble. We had one or two strong hands. Ed Kretzmann, State Department career officer, was there trying to hold things together, trying to maintain our focus on the output. But the personnel situation was extremely critical. A network within the Voice was blowing the whistle on their colleagues.

In March of 1953, I remember very clearly the day Stalin died, and our news room, as you would expect, was pouring out all the copy it could on the death of Stalin. At that very moment, on television in Washington, Joe McCarthy was questioning one of our desk editors on what passed for national television then, accusing three of his fellow editors of being pro-communist. And the issue was over the changing of phrases in a story on Guatemala—there was a revolt going on in Guatemala then—changing the description of rebels from “anti-communist” to “pro-democratic,” that this was a pro-communist buzzword, and the editors involved were allegedly showing communist sympathies. It was in that kind of an atmosphere that we were trying to operate with very little help, very little assistance from Washington, either the administration or the direction of the Voice.

From that low point to the end of the Eisenhower years, quite a transformation took place in VOA. Congress and, I assume, the administration as well, was suspicious about the Voice up in New York, uncontrolled and operating on its own, and the administration decided, in its wisdom, to move the Voice to Washington. By early 1954, the Voice of

America came down, studios and all, to Washington. Studios were built in the present building at HEW, and personnel all moved down here except for a small New York office. The news room itself was over in that old USIA building at the corner of 18th and Pennsylvania.

We were to be brought back, within control of Washington. The atmosphere initially was in that direction. New personnel started coming in. Those of you who were around then will remember that for a very brief period we had a fellow named Len Erickson as director of VOA. He happened to be a Democrat. He came out of the advertising business. President Eisenhower was criticized heavily that out of 30 million people who voted for him, he hadn't been able to find one Republican to head up the Voice. Unfortunately, Erickson did not last very long.

Ted Streibert then brought in a fellow named Jack Poppele, who had been chief engineer at WOR in New York when Ted was director of the station. Jack was essentially an engineer. Jack brought in some of his colleagues. Gene King became program manager. We had some State Department personnel, but essentially we were getting our policy direction internally. After 1954, as an independent agency, USIA picked its own policy officers. I guess Ed Kretzmann was next to the last policy officer from the State Department. From then on, the policy officers, who had, theoretically, control of content, at least the political aspects, came out of the Agency itself.

Gradually, the devastating atmosphere set by the McCarthy period dissipated. People who had been involved left the scene. Others who had been challenged continued about their work. There was pressure—by direction of the NSC Operations Coordinating Board, from Abbott, from the headquarters of USIA, to place emphasis on straight news, accurate reportage, less political, less strident broadcasting. We went through a period of adjustment. Broadcast languages were expanded. We reached out to other parts of the world. New programming, new personnel were added. The Voice, little by little, became a legitimate radio operation, or at least headed in that direction.

I think we were put to the test, the most severe test of that period, in the 1956 Hungarian revolt. Again, you will remember that there was criticism of both the Voice of America and RFE (Radio Free Europe) for having instigated that revolt, or at least made promises that led to the actions by the Hungarians.

I think postmortems on the broadcast gave the Voice a pretty clean bill of health. News was fairly straightforward. Some reports of official statements could have been misinterpreted, but I think, by and large, the Voice came out of that period looking responsible, accurate, and not responsible for the revolt, or at least for encouraging revolt. RFE probably came out a little worse in that accounting. Some of it seemed to be questionable, but we at the Voice certainly didn't get into the details of that. I would pass no judgment, even with hindsight.

Our efforts and focus became the internal organization and development of the Voice of America. As the months passed, as opportunities opened up, a whole new series of programs were initiated. A great deal of emphasis was placed on English, particularly after Bob Button replaced Jack Poppele as director of the Voice. Shortly after, George Allen came aboard as director of USIA in place of Arthur Larson. English was expanded and was made the main language of the Voice and was put on a worldwide basis. Eventually, as African nations became independent, we put on a good deal of African broadcasting. We certainly expanded in Asia. We expanded in some of the Soviet languages. In English, the forerunner of a whole new trend to non-political programming was “Music USA” with Willis Connover which actually started while we were still in New York but then developed worldwide in Washington. We followed this with programs like the American Theater of the Air, the American University of the Air, Special English, the Breakfast Shows, programs that were listenable, provided information but were not of this strident Cold War period.

The attitude of the administration began to change towards the Voice of America. The State Department backed off a good deal. There were still policy arguments, but not nearly as intense as they used to be. News gained a lot more independence. 1776 (Pennsylvania

Ave), the headquarters for USIA, began to have a little more trust in the Voice. The developments were all on the positive side. Bob Button eventually was replaced by Henry Loomis as director of the Voice, and Henry moved the Voice further in this direction. Also during Henry's regime emphasis was placed on expanding the Voice's hardware. A plan for a worldwide transmitter network was developed. A good deal of money was devoted to it, and construction was started.

Gradually by the end of the second Eisenhower term, we could legitimately say we were a professional radio outfit. We began to get into some of the aspects of modern radio, audience research, responsiveness, program booklets, reflection of variety in the presentation of American opinion, less selling of soap, more honest information, a respectable operation, if you will.

There grew a desire to institutionalize all this, and talk started about developing a Voice of America charter that would provide continuity and a basis for response to criticisms and pressures. We went through a number of efforts in that direction. I remember trying my hand at some drafts, and they were much too long and much too tedious. Finally, Henry Loomis chose a two-man committee of Jack O'Brien (Deputy Director of VOA) and myself to draw up a statement. We went through a number of drafts. Finally, one night Jack O'Brien decided to cut through it all, sat down at his typewriter, and batted out a very short, succinct, but comprehensive charter. With only one or two minor changes of words, that charter was accepted in 1961. It has the force of law today.

I'll sum up the Eisenhower years this way. The bookends for the Voice came from Foy Kohler, a foreign service officer at one end under President Truman, to Ed Murrow, a professional broadcaster at the other end under President Kennedy. In between was an eight-year period that started with Joe McCarthy and all the devastation of that period and ended with a charter for the Voice of America that authorized legitimate straight news, honest broadcasting, and a responsible radio operation. For that change, we have to thank President Eisenhower and his Administration.

WASHBURN: Thank you, Barry. That was great.

When I was in Moscow in 1959 and we were working on the American National Exhibition, where [President Richard] Nixon and [Soviet leader Nikita S.] Khrushchev debated, I got on that subway for the first time and there were some young people there. They saw I was an American, and they began trying out their English with me. They were pretty good. I said, “Where did you learn your English?' They said, “Listening to Willis Connover.” Willis, you're here. Please stand up. [General applause] Willis, you're on every day, and Lord knows how many millions of people have loved the jazz and loved you and that rolling voice.

Burnett Anderson was with us in those days. He was deputy head of the press service and later PAO in Tehran. Burnett, you did a lot of other things after that, too.

Remarks by Burnett Anderson

Colleagues and friends—I think most of you are both—the pleasure and the significance and the appropriateness of this occasion doesn't need any further endorsement from me. I've been asked to say a few words about USIA support of two major foreign policy initiatives by President Eisenhower. In the words of our then charter, promulgated by the new president on October 22, 1953, we were to “submit evidence to peoples of other nations that the objectives and policies of the United States are in harmony with, and will advance their legitimate aspirations for freedom.”

It would have been in 1951, when Elmer Davis was broadcasting for ABC and I was representing the network in Scandinavia. He was in a reminiscent mood and chatting about his experiences as a propagandist in World War II, running the Office of War Information (OWI). He said that foreign information services were all well and good, but it was only what was coming out of Washington that really mattered. He cited a case or two when great labors over a period of six months or a year in a given country had been

completely wiped out by just a press conference or a statement from the White House, the State Department, or the Pentagon. Now, in one of my favorite French phrases, I think what Davis said is a little bit true, but he overstated the case that evening. Yet those comments underline a truism that an information program can ultimately be no better than the message it carries.

In our context, they pose the operative question “What policies did President Eisenhower establish offering the world evidence that our actions and intentions merited their concurrence and support?” I think my two assigned topics furnish an unequivocal answer.

It's pertinent to recall that the Information Agency was only four months and eight days old when President Eisenhower made his historic Atoms for Peace address to the U.N. General Assembly in New York on December 8, 1953. Our first director, Ted Streibert, and Abbott Washburn were at that time rapidly putting together a rational and functional organization out of the surviving elements of principally the foreign information programs in the State Department and the Marshall Plan Agency. Both of these, as we have heard, along with the Voice, had been ravaged by Joe McCarthy, increasingly pinched by Congress. Morale of the survivors, as Tom Sorensen wrote in his The Word War, was at rock bottom.

The new Republican administration, after many years in the wilderness, was surprised to find that the kind of people that they wanted to hire weren't standing in line for appointments at government salaries. When they did find them, security clearances, with security officers seeing the threatening shadow of Joe McCarthy over every file they examined, were snail-slow and super- cautious and very hard to get. The late Nate Crabtree of Minneapolis, the new team's chief recruiter, often demanded, and even sometimes got, a clearance in 48 hours. And for years after, a fast clearance was known in the Agency as a “Crabtree.”

Eisenhower's offer at the U.N. to share the U.S. near monopoly on nuclear technology to improve the material condition of peoples everywhere and enhance the prospect for peace was not only a landmark initiative in foreign policy, but ideal evidence of his determined pursuit of peace beyond pure and simple containment of aggression.

Meanwhile, despite a plethora of obstacles and problems, the Agency, under the leadership of Streibert and Washburn, was already performing with both focus and vigor. Only a little more than six months after Eisenhower's speech, this fledgling USIA, this new agency, was able to document in its semi-annual congressional report that the Agency had given saturation—radio, press, newsreel, and other—coverage to the unfolding story, that more than 6 million people had already attended “Atoms for Peace” exhibits everywhere from Europe to Pakistan and India, and that more than a billion had seen, heard, or read about the U.S. proposal. Tom Tuch, in his new book, cites an academic study which notes that the Agency participated fully in discussions of the plan and was prepared, in advance, to make the president's words known around the world. This was an early and, I think, perhaps precedent-setting example of Ed Murrow's subsequent insistence that the Agency be in on the takeoffs, as well as on what he called crash landings.

It was also during the six months—and this is another sidelight that I simply can't resist—that the Agency had a small opportunity to give the back of its hand to Joe McCarthy, who was still riding high. Joe wrote Streibert that he wanted two of his [McCarthy's] books, one alleging a generation of treason, and the other presenting General George Marshall as a traitor, placed in all U.S. libraries overseas. He even generously offered to contribute the books. Streibert turned him down absolutely flat, in writing. I know, because I wrote that letter, along, I hasten to add, with a contingency plan for all foreseeable developments of the kind that you really need following an encounter with a specimen of the aptly named genus mephitis. No one knows why he laid off, but Joe never pursued it. He let it lie there.

I think, too, that perhaps the success of this “Atoms for Peace” campaign very early in the game may have been a factor in the president's opening the door to Ted and Abbott to the national policy-making level.

In view of the remarkable returns from the “Open Skies” proposal a year and a half later at the famous summit in Geneva with [Nikolai A.] Bulganin and [Nikita S.] Khrushchev, the beginning, to say the very least, was ironic, indeed. The offer of mutual aerial inspection was so strongly opposed by Secretary of State Dulles, no surprise to this audience, that it was stricken from the text of Eisenhower's opening statement. As it turned out, it was Ike's only major presentation at that conclave in Geneva. He took it into the conference on a separate sheet of paper to be put forward—and agreed with Dulles on this—only under particular circumstances. Eisenhower, of course, avowedly determined to show the world that the soldier-president was a man of peace, found the circumstances to introduce it.

Our records of this period are replete with accounts of Agency support for these two initiatives, and they cover no less than four pages of the Agency's Semi-annual report for the latter half of 1956, only a year and a half after that landmark conference. Here are some compressed highlights:

VOA Broadcast Eisenhower's UN speech in 37 languages, full text, in all Wireless Files as well.

Mutual Inspection for Peace exhibit at the U.N., followed by a vote to give the proposal priority in U.N. disarmament talks.

Dramatic demonstration of aerial photography techniques feasibility designed for government officials and opinion leaders abroad in an extra-ordinarily convincing pamphlet.

Two documentary films on the same subject.

One of the largest “Atoms for Peace” exhibits shown at the Geneva U.N. conference on peaceful uses of atomic energy held in August 1955.

A continued showing of seven other atomic energyexhibits in dozens of countries, using mobile exhibits and even river barges in remote areas.

Distribution of the pamphlet “Atomic Power for Peace” in 35 languages and 6.5 million copies. And much, much more.

The answer to the question I posed at the outset is clear. Eisenhower's actions and policies met both Elmer Davis' terms and those of the USIA mandate. “Atoms for Peace” and “Open Skies” were indeed persuasive evidence of a country seeking peace and constructive cooperation in world affairs.

Only last Sunday, strong support for this judgment came from what might be considered by some people a somewhat unlikely source, Chalmers Roberts, who covered Eisenhower during Roberts' long and distinguished career as a reporter for the Washington Post. Chalmers wrote, “Open Skies was quickly rejected by Khrushchev as a form of espionage, but it was a proposal so fraught with hope for a war-weary world that it propelled both sides forward in their search for arms-control agreements. Historically, I consider it the ancestor of today's many arms-control and reduction measures. Thus, it seems to me that Ike at Geneva broke the mold of the Cold War.”

To the extent that USIA helped carry Eisenhower's message to this war-weary world, I think we can feel a measure of satisfaction and, indeed, perhaps a bit of pride. Now I'll let Chalmers Roberts say the rest of it. “But looking back to those often grim years, I think Americans owe much to the soldier-president and his determination to avoid nuclear war and find paths to meaningful peace. Indeed, his birthday will be a day worthy of remembering Ike, and fondly.”

WASHBURN: As I had the White House liaison responsibility, I remember taking over there that piece of paper which told Joe McCarthy what he could do with his books, the one-paragraph letter which Burnett had drafted. I had to take it to Sherman Adams, because obviously that's where the backfiring would take place. They had to be prepared for the blast. So I went in; he had a thousand things on his desk and he was on the telephone. Finally, he turned to me. He never would talk much, you know. I explained what we planned to do and handed this draft to him. He looked at it, without blinking, and said, “Okay.” But in that one instant, he was really saying, “We'll take any heat this guy wants to give us on this.”

You said Joe was offering to contribute the money for the books. Actually he had some big right-winger in Texas who had come up with the money to publish the books. In fact, the books were printed and were in some warehouse somewhere, and he fully expected us to send them to the USIS libraries all over the world saying that [George] Marshall was a traitor.

Jim Halsema and I went around the world together in 1956. During the Suez crisis we were shot at by the British in Cairo. I can't begin to talk about that and all our other experiences on that trip. What a great thing it was to have officers like Jim around. He had been for several years in a Japanese prison in Manila, and he really knew the Far East. This was a tremendous advantage for us in those early days of the Agency. Jim, you served in Singapore, Manila, Bangkok, and in Washington you were deputy assistant director for the Far East. Will you talk a little about operations in the field under Ike?

Remarks by James J. “Jim” Halsema

The first time I ever heard the name “Eisenhower,” I didn't really know exactly who he was. The news filtered into our internment camp in the mountains of the Philippines that a general by the name of Eisenhower had been appointed the head of the European theater of operations. Who was this? I asked my family, and my father said, “Oh, I met him. He

was a lieutenant colonel who came out on the ship with us when MacArthur brought his staff to the Philippines in '35." And my sister said, "Oh, yes, I taught his son John. He was pretty smart at math." But that was our introduction to a man who became very important in our lives.

I would like to say more than anything else, that our agency and our operations is not only media and policy; it's people. Looking back on our audiences around the world I have talked with over the years, that the thing they remember more than anything else is our people. The crowning achievement of a USIS officer was when the people in the country to which he or she was assigned would say, "Oh, yes, you're my friend and I believe what you have to say." That is what really counts.

I came into the IIA operation, as it existed under the State Department, in 1949. I was part of that World War II generation. I'd been exposed to three years of enemy propaganda, and I realized that we were still in a war, with a different set of opponents, but that there were still people who were trying to run our country down, and that we had to tell our story and tell it effectively. That's really what inspired most of us to get into this work.

In 1950, we were exposed to the shock of Korea. It's hard for me to explain to my children, but this so-called Cold War wasn't very cold; it was pretty hot at times. We were having a plane shot down along the coast as they were snooping on the Chinese and the Russians in East Asia. I was stationed in Singapore when Korea occurred, and I guess the most frustrating day of my life was being up on a mountaintop in Penang and not being able to find out what was happening in the war. But several people that we knew in Singapore were killed in that war.

Southeast Asia was a place about which most Americans were quite ignorant. A lot of American military people had been to the Philippines in the course of their assignments and, of course, many hundreds of thousands came there in World War II, but most of Southeast Asia was a complete unknown area because it had been in colonial hands.

I think a lot of the problems we've had subsequently are due to the fact that in the immediate post-war era, not many people in Washington knew about Southeast Asia, and they cared even less.

The advent of the new administration found us in Manila. Mind you, this was before USIA actually came into operation. Later on in March, 1953 we heard that there were seven groups investigating IIA, which was the predecessor of USIA. In April, the famous RIFs [reduction in force] began, and almost every day a cable would come in saying somebody, some poor fellow or woman, had “gotten it.” One of the people, incidentally, who “got it” in those days, but fortunately managed to survive despite that, was Bernie [Bernard] Lavin, whom the Agency has subsequently honored. But that 25% cut that Congress had ordered caused enormous uncertainty to us in the field. It wasn't just at the Voice that people were worried; it was people overseas wondering how long they would last. It was in June that Ike submitted his reorganization plans for the Mutual Security Agency and U.S. Information Agency, but the details were lacking. We didn't really know what this was all going to be about.

In the meantime, in the Philippines we were working on a very interesting program in which we were promoting free elections. The U.S. Government was obviously trying to get Ramon Magsaysay elected president, but we didn't say so and we were very careful not to intervene in the election. All we said was, “You should vote freely, and you should vote.”

In July, after the Korean truce was announced, we heard that Ted Streibert had been made the head of the Agency. We were pleased to hear that he was a man who came from the Harvard Business School, and thought maybe this was someone who could get the organization going so we could find our way through the morass we'd been in.

And it was on the 19th of October, 1953, that we got the first official word directly from Washington when Sax Bradford arrived in Manila. Sax was one of the four assistant directors that Ted Streibert had set up to run the Agency. The system was a very good

one; it was a very simple one. It was to eliminate as many layers as possible. You had a man who ran the Agency in Washington and he had deputies who went out and ran the program in the field. Ideally, they were supposed to spend most of their time in the field. The media were reduced to what he called the service level. That is, all except VOA. The PAOs (Public Affairs Officers) in each country were made directly responsible to the assistant directors. Sax called himself “a regional expediter. I'm your man in Washington. I'm the man who will try to get things done so you can do your work.” This was a whole new concept. It was one that also, he said, called for the maximum possible cooperation with private organizations. We couldn't do the jobs entirely by ourselves.

On November 20, 1953, we had a visit from Vice President Nixon, who came to see (President Ramon) Magsaysay. On December 18, Ted Streibert came to Manila to see us. Here was the head of the Agency, and he was coming to see us in person! He said that the period of adjustment would be over by the first of January, and that he could make promises for permanent status for most of the American employees—but he couldn't say about local employees at that time.

That, incidentally, brings up one of the real problems that we had over many years. I don't think we've fully solved it. It's not just the Americans who have made up our Agency; it's our local employees. They are the ones who have fought through thick and thin, often at great risk to their own life and limb and freedom to support our ideals. I think we cannot say too much for them, particularly since we've always suffered from having to move Americans from post to post so often that we never really quite got around to teaching them all about the language and the culture of the country that they were serving in. We had to learn, if we were smart, from the national employees we were working with. They are the ones who have done our job for us on many, many occasions.

The upshot of all this reorganization was that Ted Streibert had promised that he was going to move people around to where the need was the greatest. At that particular point, Dien Bien Phu had fallen. French Indochina had been divided. We were concerned, even

then, about having to drop an atomic bomb, (as I later understood). The idea was to bolster Southeast Asia against further communist penetration, and the key was Thailand. General Donovan, “Wild Bill” Donovan, was sent in to be the ambassador, and he was given a team of people from all over the world to help him shore up Thailand against communist subversion. In effect, this was the precursor of JUSPAO (Joint US Public Affairs Office) in Vietnam.

In 1955, I came back to Washington to be the assistant to George Hellyer, who was the deputy to Sax Bradford. I was given one task, and that was, “Get people out in the field the things they need. Go around to every one of the Agency offices and make sure that they're delivering. Give them the idea that this is urgent and that they've got to take extraordinary methods to get the things they need there now, not later. This is not the time for bureaucratic methods.” So that was my big job in Washington. I also went out to the field and I listened to what our people had to say.

I thought that this whole idea of the assistant directors was a very good one. I'm sorry that it fell into disuse after a while. We've reverted to many of our bureaucratic ways. But there's nothing better for a person who's working overseas than to know that he's got somebody here in Washington who is fighting the battles for him and who understands what his problems are.

Over the years, we have never really reconciled the mass-versus-the-elite approach. Yes, we said we were going to go for the elite, but, for instance, for all the mobile units we had charging around through the boondocks of Southeast Asia, we never quite got to the whole population.

Until the invention of the transistor radio, radio was not really a mass medium in places that had no electricity. Today, of course, it is, and we have competition from Ted Turner around the world in television.

I have always felt that there was no real coordination between the field and the Voice, and that that was a shame. There should have been more of that. We never had enough continuity, particularly in places that had rare languages and cultures, so that at least there would be one man at the post who knew what the score was in that particular country.

The fact is that we, as Americans, have always stressed the here and now, rather than the long range. After I finished the National War College, I was, for a while, the acting head of the Office of Policy and Plans. The one thing I learned from that job was the Agency does not like plans. [General laughter] I think that we still have the problem of collective memory. I think organizations like ours particularly need them, and that a meeting like this is something for which I commend Tom and Abbott and all the others who have gone to the trouble of getting it together, because we need more of these get-togethers.

WASHBURN: Thank you, Jim. Such wise words.

Tom Tuch was, of course, in Moscow and saw the beginnings there of the disarmament dialogue and the exchanges. His on-the-spot perspective is very interesting. Tom.

Remarks by Hans “Tom” Tuch

In the early 1950s, the Eisenhower Administration learned that the Soviet government would not tolerate any contacts between ourselves and its people, and kept its population virtually in isolation from the outside world. After the death of Stalin, the rise of Khrushchev, the 1955 Geneva Summit, however, there appeared the first indication of a slight thaw in the relation- ship.

The thaw was at least partially occasioned by Khrushchev's desire for recognition of the Soviet Union as a world power and equal adversary of the United States, one whose stature and culture deserved respect in the West. The Soviets seemed to have felt that earning such recognition, and even admiration, could be furthered by exporting such notable cultural achievements as the Bolshoi and Kirov Ballet and the Moiseyev Dance

Ensemble. They further thought to convince the world of the superiority of the Soviet system, as they put it, by showing off their prowess in sports competitions, those they could be counted upon to win, such as track and field, wrestling, and ice hockey.

The Eisenhower Administration, in turn, realized that the only way we could ever get the Soviets to open their windows to fresh Western views was to insist on reciprocity. That is, that the Soviets permit U.S.-Soviet cultural exchanges and U.S. presentations in the Soviet Union. According to Arthur Larson's recollection, which he conveyed in a letter to Abbott Washburn for this symposium, Eisenhower said USIA's number-one job was to ease tensions with the USSR. The president particularly wanted to reach young people, offer unlimited access to America in exchange for the same for us in the USSR, according to Arthur Larson.

This convergence of interests, typified by “the spirit of Camp David,” (the historic meeting of Eisenhower and Khrushchev), led to the negotiation of the first comprehensive U.S.-Soviet cultural agreement in January 1958. The negotiation had been preceded two years earlier, in 1956, by the conclusion of an agreement to exchange periodicals, Amerika magazine and USSR magazine (later changed to Soviet Life).

The U.S. objective for this new exchange agreement was to get information and ideas from America direct to the Soviet population, practically for the first time. We hoped that through public diplomacy programs and personal contact, we would be able to crack, if ever so slightly, the Soviet monopoly on information about the West and thereby try to counteract the pervasive anti-American propaganda and distorted information to which Soviet citizens had been continually exposed.

One must remember that since the end of World War II, there had been practically no contact between American and Soviet citizens on the non-governmental level, and that the only medium of communication available to the United States had been the heavily jammed Voice of America. Our interest, therefore, was that information and cultural

activities might reach the maximum number of people in as many places in the Soviet Union as possible.

While the State Department was the lead organization to negotiate and conclude this first cultural agreement, it was USIA that had the principal responsibility of implementing it. And the three areas of primary concentration were exchanges, publications, and exhibits. Cultural and educational exchanges were at that time still in the purview of the State Department, but in the field, in Moscow, it was the press and cultural attach#—a euphemism for public affairs officer—who was charged with carrying out the program. This involved the first exchanges of graduate students, of delegations of writers, composers, artists, and performing arts exchanges, such as the New York Philharmonic, “My Fair Lady” and the Robert Shaw Chorale.

I have already mentioned Amerika magazine, which, of course, was USIA's responsibility in Washington. Supervising the distribution was my responsibility at that time. Every month, on the day the journal was to be distributed, I set out to check the newsstands in Moscow to see that copies of the periodical were, indeed, delivered and on sale. I saw lines forming immediately when Soviet citizens noted the distinctive journal disappearing under the counter of the newsstands, to be produced reluctantly and secretively by the sellers only for favorite customers who often had made prior arrangements to obtain the magazine, usually at a price considerably higher than the 50 kopecks printed on the cover.

Of all the public diplomacy activities with which USIA was involved in the Soviet Union in the 1950s, the one that, in my opinion, had the greatest and longest-lasting impact was the American National Exhibition in Moscow in August 1959. It was a huge organizational, architectural, and budgetary venture that was planned, designed, and coordinated by the Agency, Abbott Washburn, presiding. Harold “Chad” McClellan, Assistant Secretary of Commerce, was director general of the exhibition. The exhibition featured the latest in U.S. home and entertainment technology (including an RCA color television studio), science, fashion, American family living, consumer products, photography, the Edward Steichen

“Family of Man” exhibit, and art. The centerpiece was a Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome that contained a gigantic seven-screen film projection depicting a 24-hour period in the lives of typical Americans living in various parts of the United States. The dome also held an IBM computer—new at that time—that answered thousands of questions about America posed by the Soviet visitors. Bob Sivard was head of the exhibition division at the time and coordinated the show from Washington. Jack Masey supervised the design of the exhibition.

Nowadays, the exhibition is remembered in this country primarily as the locale for Richard Nixon's famous “kitchen debate” with Nikita Khrushchev. But a little-known story will illustrate how President Eisenhower also got directly and personally involved in this public-diplomacy venture. The twentieth century art that was to be displayed at the American National Exhibit had caused considerable controversy even before the show opened. The criticism came primarily from certain influential members of Congress who complained that it was too modern, too abstract, and too extreme. History does repeat itself. [General laughter]

The controversy escalated to the point that it endangered the entire exhibit, and it went all the way up to the president to resolve. The president, an amateur painter himself, did not want to be accused of censorship, yet he wanted to appease the congressmen. In a Solomonic decision, he decreed that the art exhibit was to be expanded to include the nineteenth century, and that some American art that was more traditional and realistic was to be added to provide balance. The selection committee and curators of the exhibit objected to what they claimed was censorship, but they bowed to the inevitable, and thus, the exhibition became one of nineteenth and twentieth century American art.

There is a footnote to this story. When Nikita Khrushchev returned for a second visit to the exhibition—the first had been with Nixon—his interpreter got lost in the crush of the crowd that surrounded the chairman as he viewed the display of American art. I was one of the people escorting him, and I was corralled into amateur interpreting duty. All went well as

Khrushchev examined the nineteenth and early-twentieth century American paintings. When, however, he came upon a work by John Marin, and I explained the title “Sea and Sky,” Khrushchev remarked, “It looks as though (pardon the expression) someone peed on the canvas.” Stuttering, I translated. I said, “The chairman said it appeared to him that a little boy had made a puddle on the canvas. [General laughter] Khrushchev inquired and was told how his comment had been interpreted into English, whereupon he admonished, “Please interpret the chairman correctly,” and I did.

It is difficult to measure, in public diplomacy terms, the impact of such a major and expensive effort. In my judgment, it more than paid off. For hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens, many coming from afar, it was the first glimpse of America, their first personal contact and conversation with Americans, the fifty-odd Russian-speaking American guides mostly young graduate students. Not only did they see something of life in America, but they also enjoyed themselves, sampling Pepsi for the first time, having their hair coiffed and their faces made up by Coty beauticians, swaying with the music in the fashion show, getting their first look at color television, seeing the inside of a typical American one-family home. And many remembered the experience for a long time.

On a visit to Moscow fifteen years later, I met a man on the street, still wearing on his lapel the American National Exhibition emblem, who told me, when I asked him, that his visit to the exhibit in 1959 was a lifelong memory, a pleasant memory, since it was his first look at America.

WASHBURN: I remember, Tom, going into the Oval Office one day at that time, and President Eisenhower had a whole bunch of these paintings around from the nineteenth century. I wondered what they were doing there. It turned out they were some of his favorites. One was a vivid painting of ducks hanging in a hunting lodge. It turned out that he had had those brought in from the National Gallery of Art, and he made a selection of canvases that he recommended go to the Soviet Union. [General laughter] Of course, his avocation was painting.

It's so clear to me that any one of you here could come up and talk about the Agency from your own vantage point during those years, and I wish that we had time for everyone to do it. One way is via the oral history project which Lew [G. Lewis] Schmidt is “honchoing” so very effectively. All tonight's material is going to fit beautifully into that project, I must say.

We will now go over to the Officers' Club, have dinner and continue the discussion afterwards with Henry Loomis. I hope, after that, that we can have some give-and-take if there's any time and any energy left for a bit of Q and A.

Thank you, everyone.

After Dinner Session

WASHBURN: Two former directors of USIA are here, and two other former directors were very sorry they couldn't come, namely Leonard Marks and Arthur Larson. Arthur was particularly looking forward to being here and said, “There are so many people who will be in your audience that I haven't seen for thirty years.” He sent us a message, part of which I'll read later. He asked me to greet you all very, very warmly.

The current director, Bruce Gelb, also wanted to be here and Mike Pistor, currently the Counselor of the Agency, has a message from him.

PISTOR: Thank you. What I have is a letter to Abbott from Bruce Gelb who had intended, until very late in the day, to come to the symposium. I'd like to read it.

“Dear Abbott, I am very sorry not to be able to attend the symposium today, because I am a great admirer of Ike and I'm a great admirer of Abbott Washburn. It would have been especially valuable to learn more about the origins of this unique and vital agency from the lips of some of its founding fathers, and to join a group of my illustrious predecessors in discussing USIA's historic and continuing role in our nation's affairs.

“I know that you will excuse my absence when I tell you that what keeps me away is a meeting on Capitol Hill, which takes on a special urgency at this time. Please accept my congratulations for a first-rate idea and my best wishes for a happy and productive outcome. I took forward to hearing about the symposium's conclusion. Sincerely, Bruce.” [General applause]

WASHBURN: Thank you so much, Mike.

Earlier we heard from Tom Tuch, Jim Halsema, Barry Zorthian, and Bernie Anderson, all four of whom gave us highly interesting, personal insights.

Henry Loomis had two long meetings with Eisenhower, one with Ted Streibert, about which he'll tell you, and one when he and I went up to Gettysburg when Ike was in retirement. We had over an hour with him on that occasion. Henry, as you know, served as head of the Voice of America during the Eisenhower period and later as Deputy Director of the Agency. Earlier, he was also head of our research operations and overseas polling during the Eisenhower administration. It's a pleasure to call on him now. Henry.

Remarks by Henry Loomis

Good evening. It's great to be back with so many old friends. It's been a long time. I know you've come a lot further, but I am meant to talk about the past. The past is pretty interesting, as well.

Abbott talked about the two personal meetings I had with Eisenhower, but there were two other occasions when I learned about his thinking on public affairs and information activities. The first, which was mentioned somewhat earlier this evening, was the Jackson Committee—named after Bill Jackson, not C.D. The formal name was the Committee on International Information Activities, which a cover name. Mr. Eisenhower had been elected, saying that we would “roll back the Curtain.” That sounded great in Des Moines, but the day after he found himself elected, he suddenly realized he didn't have a finite plan

to roll back the curtain. So he appointed this committee of people, most of whom ended up in the government, to take a look at what he could do in real life. Not what you could say that would be nice, but rather what you would physically be able to do. He appointed that committee a couple of days after his election, and asked them to report well before he took over the reins. The staff had to be recruited immediately from within the government. [Editor's Note: The report took five months to prepare.]

I was one of the dozen or so who were assigned to that staff. I came from CIA to work on a particular sector. When I made my presentation to the board as to what this sector could do, they turned white and said, “No, no! A thousand times no!”

I said, “I understand. If I were in your position, I might make the same decision.”

At that point, Bill Jackson said, “What do you know about IIA?” [Editor's Note: IIA at that time was part of the Department of State, responsible for overseas information activities.]

I said, “What in the world is that?”

He said, “There are two State Department people, one is a Russian expert and the other is a policy planner, and they don't know anything about IIA, either. You're here. So as of now, IIA is your job.”

I spent the next six months learning and making up my mind. At the end, I was sure I knew what should be done. Whether it was right or not, remained to be seen, but I was sure.

Watching IIA being beaten by Senator Joseph McCarthy was like watching a snake try to eat a mouse. We heard the story earlier about how Mr. Washburn and others turned down the Senator's desire to put his books in the libraries. I did not have that experience, but I had another one, because Mr. [Roy] Cohn and Mr. [David] Schine, first of all, wanted me to go to the Hill and get the word. I said, “I'm sorry. My office is up here,” which was on I Street. “If you want to see me, I'm here anytime you're ready.” After about the fourth

invitation to Capitol Hill, they started inviting me to Mr. Schine's hotel in New York, and I said, “No, I'm sorry. I can't go to New York. My office is here.” So I never had direct contact with that group, for which I am most grateful. [General laughter]

But I did have contact with Carl Marcy in the Senate, the Fulbright Committee in the Senate [Editor's Note: the Senate Foreign Relations Committee], and I had contact with many people in IIA, particularly in the Voice. I had contact with many knowledgeable citizens from diverse countries, all of whom had the one and pure solution to the problem. So at the end, I at least had exposure.

We wrote the chapter of the report dealing with the subject of information, propaganda, very much based on the necessity to present only the truth. It was the only way to get the respect and confidence of the audience. If you weren't truthful, you would be found out sooner or later. The report was written along those lines. The committee accepted it, and I know that it was discussed with the president and he accepted it, as well. So that was the first time I had some reading on how the president himself felt about it.

Then I came over to USIA. Ted Streibert, just about a week or so after he'd been appointed, asked me to come and see him. I assumed that he wanted me to go over this chapter of the report and discuss my views on it. He said, “Well, I've read the report and I agree with it. Now, will you come help me do it?” That I had not expected. So I went on leave of absence from CIA and became his assistant.

It became clear fairly soon that one of the problems with the Information Agency was that it didn't have any information. It didn't have any information about what the U.S. Government was doing, nor did it have any information about what the Russians were doing. So I took a look at the first one, and I asked my secretary, “Could you get me the NSC papers on India?” She looked blank, and I said, “Well, why don't you go to the policy people. They'll have a copy of the NSC documents.”

She came back and told me that we did not have any of the NSC documents in USIA. We had no way of knowing what the policy was. It turned out that the NSC understood that we were riddled with communists and shouldn't—and couldn't—have the documents.

I talked to Bobby Cutler (General Robert Cutler, head of the NSC staff for the president), who had been one of the members of the Jackson Committee. As a special dispensation, he agreed that I could see the documents and, a little later, that the documents could come to me in USIA. I had to set up a special file and only I had access to it. It took a year before we were able to establish a routine for regular access to these policy papers by the policy staff. That is, I think, an example of how far behind the eight ball we were when USIA started.

The second problem was, “What is the enemy doing?” or “What are the neutrals or the other countries thinking?” of which we knew nothing. We persuaded Ted Streibert to set up the Office of Research and Intelligence.

There had been an embryo of such activities in the Voice of America for some time. I found three exceedingly interesting people in that organization. One is here tonight, Lou Olom. He is the one who was doing mostly intelligence. There was [Ross] Newpher, who was “the librarian,” but he was much more than that. He was the only one who had files. He was the only one who could tell you anything about anything. He was an excellent gentleman. The third was an eccentric genius by the name of Leo Crespi, who was the public polling person, an excellent professional.

So the first thing we tried to do was to find out what the Europeans thought about America and Russia; for example, whether they wished to be “red or dead,” in the words of those times. We had simultaneous public opinion surveys, done in four or five of the countries in West Europe. We got the answers back and compared Germany to France, to England, to Italy, and so forth. It was pretty interesting information. Not particularly hopeful information, but it was significant.

So I showed it to Ted Streibert, and Ted said, “I'm going over to the White House for my monthly meeting with the president. Come along with me and give him this information.”

So we went over, and the president was very cordial. Ted said that I was there and perhaps he'd be interested in the information. So the president looked at me, and I started on my little spiel. As I was talking, he turned sideways and was rocking in his chair, sort of looking out the window, had his glasses in his mouth, and pretty soon his eyes were half-closed. I thought, “Oh, my God, what do I do now?” But I kept going and finished it.

He just kept rocking, his eyes were closed, and there wasn't anything else for me to say. I suppose it really was only a few seconds, but it seemed a millennium. Suddenly he turned around and he took his glasses out of his mouth, opened his eyes, and started asking questions. He had remembered just about every figure I had given him. And it was a very interesting discussion, because the basic thrust of the information was that the Italians would rather be “red than dead.” They really didn't want us to use nuclear weapons, if push came to shove. There was no question that the majority, varying amounts of majority, but the majority of all of the countries felt that way.

The thing that fascinated me was his interest in the subject and his ability to absorb figures and analyze them as rapidly as he did, and clearly, the importance he placed on “public opinion.”

The third time I had contact—not with Eisenhower directly, but indirectly—was when I was in the executive office of the president right after Sputnik (1957), working for Jim Killian (Science Adviser to the President). Here again, we had a major problem of what to do with information. America was in shock, thinking the Russians were better technically than we were. “We were coming apart, we were no good, we were about to be overrun,” all of which was not true. I observed how the president reacted to that, how he felt about it, again saying nothing but the truth, and he was annoyed every time anyone in his administration oversold the future. “We are going to launch tomorrow and it's going to be

great," they would announce. Of course, it was launched the next week, and it collapsed. Every time that happened, he got really very annoyed. But he stuck to his guns, saying nothing but the truth, and letting the real world catch up.

The fourth and last time was when Abbott and I went up to see him in Gettysburg in 1967, because we thought it would be a marvelous time to reminisce and get in some depth his feelings on subjects of importance and interest to the Information Agency. I put down some notes afterwards which rambled, as the conversation did. I tried to summarize some of his thoughts in somewhat coherent paragraphs.

He opened the meeting by saying that he felt that the whole world was really only concerned with the U.S. and the USSR, who was ahead or would be ahead. That was all they cared about. Everything was looked at through that prism.

He then went on, again without much questioning from either Abbott or me, that he was concerned about the low priority that this government had given information activities. To him it was as it used to be in the Army before World War I or II, when intelligence was in a low priority, and we had a colonel in charge of intelligence. He had had to rely on British intelligence when he first went to SHAPE. He felt that the information side was now being neglected in the same way, and that it deserved much more.

Another example he used was that he felt that the neglect of information now was as serious as the neglect of the military in 1913 and 1939, which is about as strong a neglect as you could have. He also said that he had testified in 1945 before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in support of information activities. He told them that it was woefully low and that he recommended that the budget be at least $750 million. That was in 1946 or '47 dollars.

Later on, he used another analogy of the many hundreds of billions that we had spent on the military and foreign aid, and he felt that it would have been much better if at least 5% of that money had been spent on the information dealing with these issues. He was really

quite annoyed at, for example, the U.N., where everybody stood up and said America was no good, and where all the people or governments to which we gave all kinds of things never mentioned it to their own people. He felt the American government ought to do much more on that subject.

We then had an interesting and somewhat confused discussion on the subject of the “official voice.” I'm sure some of you who were around then remember that the president kept saying there should be a special broadcast time for the “official voice” of the government, that would be truthful and authentic and believed. We kept having difficulty as to just how to do that. Did it mean the rest of the VOA program was untruthful? How did you get the audience to understand what you meant? He had some interesting words on that. He said that what he meant by “official voice” was a voice that was true, trustworthy, not propaganda or entertainment. By definition, the Voice of America must be factual. Everything must be provable and open to the world to see. Now, we certainly believe that, in so far as the news is concerned, but there obviously are other necessary parts of programming that cannot live up to that standard, because you must get into the subject of opinions and the diversity of opinions. We raised that with him, as well.

One of Eisenhower's own statements later on showed that he was thinking of things other than just the “official voice.” It was clear that he did not have the highest regard for the press. He felt that they were more interested in making headlines and getting more pay. He felt very strongly that we should not feel squeamish—that, I believe, was his word—about trying to influence foreign press people or radio or television people; that that was one of our functions. Anything you could get the local media to do would be more effective than what the Americans did. Now, I believe that's true of many things, but, again, it doesn't tie in with the “official voice.”

We also asked Eisenhower a few questions on how he felt about RFE, not what the programs were, but what the funding was, which, of course, as we all know, at that point was covert. Was that the right thing to do? News was just breaking publicly that it had

been covert. He said Frank Wisner had come to him and said that the cover was good, it would not be broken, and that he felt that it was so important that RFE have credibility; he therefore made the exception to allow it to continue to be funded covertly.

Then, rather unkindly, we asked him about the U-2. He said, “Well, again, I was told that there was no possible way that the plane or Mr. Powers would survive. They urged me not to make a statement. I didn't want to, but I finally made the statement. The one thing I refused to do after Khrushchev opened everything, was to apologize to Khrushchev for what I had done in defense of the United States. It was necessary to do and it had to be done.”We then raised the point of dissent to U.S. policy. How should the Information Agency handle dissent, of which there was plenty? He was really quite strong on this and felt it very personally. He said, “The president has the responsibility. It is wrong to give the same weight to people who do not have the responsibility, who criticize the action, whatever it may be.” We went back and forth on that and pointed out that we had to at least mention there was dissent. We had to give the thinking behind the dissent and the nuances from different sides. He finally said, “Yes, I can see that. You have to. But it is important that when you do, you clearly emphasize who has what responsibility, and that it is wrong to equate everybody as being equal. The president has more responsibility than anybody else, more than any single senator.” He mentioned a few particular names. “More than any Cabinet member, more than anybody else. And that should be made crystal-clear when you are discussing dissent.” He was emphatic on that subject.

The reason he finally agreed that USIA should discuss dissent, was that it was probably the best way for foreigners to understand the American system of government. In this way, foreigners would see that ours was a government that would permit open dissent.

He followed that statement up with another story. Marshal Zhukov had come over on a visit shortly after the war. Eisenhower described him as the only good communist he had ever met. Apparently Time magazine had a different opinion of him. In any case, Marshal

Zhukov was annoyed at the article that Time had run about him. He asked the president to ban Time. The president said, “I can't.”

“What do you mean?” said Zhukov.

“I can't, and it would be wrong. I can't ban any magazine or censor any other publication about anything they say. In fact, Mr. Marshal, it is for the freedom of the press that we went to war.” He said at the end he still didn't think Zhukov understood it or believed it. [General laughter]

We then brought up coordination. How do you get the impact of information into policy-making before the fact? He readily agreed that it should be done, but he said he knew of no one way of doing it. He felt the way that he tried to operate was about as good as any; that the way he chose was to try to get all the people involved in a particular decision together in one room and let them argue with each other. He would sit and listen and agree with this one, disagree with that one, in his own mind, without saying it. Then when everyone had said their piece, he would either make his decision there and then, or, if necessary, say, “I'll think about it,” and go out and play golf or go on a boat or do something while thinking about it. Then when he had made his decision, he would announce it, and that was that. He felt strongly that the information dimension should be one of the voices heard in such a discussion.

Should USIA be heard, or should the State Department speak for it? Eisenhower said he felt very strongly that the State Department was meant to make policy, but it couldn't run anything. [General laughter] Therefore, USIA should clearly be an independent agency and speak with its own voice. He also felt that the organization that had existed when he was president—the NSC and the OCB [Operations Coordinating Board], which was meant to be the deputies coordinating the policies and execution of the policies made by the wise NSC—was only a dance on a toadstool and never really worked. But he did feel, for

example, that if the Kennedys had had the OCB and had used it, we would not have had the Bay of Pigs.

Eisenhower felt, again, when it comes to policy, he said, “People get mad at me, annoyed with me, because I keep going back to the Constitution and the fundamentals. I think that is what it's all about. The U.S. covets no territory, does not wish to dominate any people, but desires to create a world community of free nations at peace.” That was the principle against which he tried to put proposals and policies.

We then had a discussion of the problem of having both foreign and domestic audiences, and how do you separate what you say to one from the other. Of course, obviously, you can't. We started asking specific questions. For example, I asked what did he think about the armed forces network in Germany. He said, “That should be all right because they're only using one frequency.” I said, “Oh, no, sir, they don't use one frequency; they use many frequencies because they have radios all over Germany.”

He said, “Oh, I didn't know that. I can see then where that might be a problem with the Germans as compared to our just entertaining our troops.” I found it dismaying that he had thought it was just one frequency.

Another question we talked about was unconditional surrender. Again he said that was a tough one, because domestically it was the right thing to do; it unified the American people, gave them a clear goal. On the other hand, it unified the German people and made their fight longer and more difficult for us. So there was a direct dichotomy. He was also not particularly complimentary about how the decision was made, sort of “spur-of-the-moment and off-the-cuff by one of our presidents.”

I asked Eisenhower another question. Abbott and I and others had tried to get him to make a speech to the world on July Fourth, similar to the annual State of the Union speech. He said, “There's no reason to do that. The State of the Union is broadcast around the world.”

We said, “Yes, that's true, but the State of the Union is written for the Congress and the American people. Much of it is of some interest to the rest of the world, but a lot of it is purely our own problems. What we were talking about was a speech by you to the outside world about what are U.S. goals, what are our policies, what are our abilities, what are our desires, what should we be able to do together.”

He said after a pause, “I hadn't thought about that. I think you may well have been right. I may have been wrong. I know I was a world figure. I should have perhaps used that more, but I was diffident. I didn't want to be too forward, and I didn't do it.”

Abbott said, “Well, you probably had the press of time.”

The president said, “No, it wasn't a matter of time. I just didn't really realize what you were talking about.” This again was the problem of keeping communications opens, because we would send up papers and so forth; but it was not like almost daily personal meetings with him of the kind Secretary Dulles had.

Other interesting things came out that were asides which you might be interested in, but have nothing to do with information or USIA. Apparently [John F.] Kennedy had talked to him about the Cuban missile confrontation. He felt that Kennedy had been much too cautious. He had advised him not to make any promises about never invading Cuba. He felt that Kennedy was not really at home in foreign affairs, and that Kennedy didn't realize what Eisenhower believed to be the truth, namely that the tougher you were on the Russians, the less likely they were to make an attack on Berlin or any other place.

On another subject, Eisenhower felt that membership in the Congress is not good training for a president, because Congress is very good at being sure that nobody has any responsibility. [General laughter] Your committee may, he said, or somebody else may, but you don't. The president added, when you're brought up and work hard at that, it is difficult

to go into the Executive, where you have to make the decisions and be accountable for them.

The last subject we touched on was Vietnam. He said he felt very strongly that the idea of a gradual increase in the response was absolutely wrong, because if you go up gradually, the other guy will go up gradually, too, and you just keep right on escalating together. Once you decided to go, go with everything you're got and go for broke. That is the way to do it, once you decide to go. Now, whether or not you should go is a much more difficult issue than, in his words, “I'll get my feet in just a little bit and just play around.” He said, “Whatever you do, don't do that.”

So as we said earlier today, Ike was an extraordinary man. Unlike his Secretary of State, he believed strongly in public opinion and its impact on the world. I think we were very lucky to serve during his time.

Thank you.

WASHBURN: Henry, what a fascinating portrait. I forgot we asked all that stuff. [General laughter] But I remember it was a great meeting.

I want to thank everybody who worked on this Eisenhower Centennial symposium. We had a wonderful committee of Tom Tuch, Bob Lincoln, Cliff Groce, Fred Coffey, “Mim” [Miriam] Johnston, a whole lot of others. Everybody was so enthusiastic.

Frank Shakespeare had an episode, an incident, with Ike. Would you share that with us, Frank?

Comment by Frank Shakespeare

My incident is a very small one compared to what we have heard earlier tonight. But it may well be the final incident, completing the story of Eisenhower and USIA.

In November 1968, Richard Nixon was elected president. Around December, I was designated his incoming USIA director. Eisenhower was then in Walter Reed Hospital, and everybody knew he was dying. Unexpectedly I received an invitation to visit him in the hospital. He was seeing some of Nixon's incoming officers and talking with them. Thinking it would be a very brief visit, I went to his hospital room. He was in a bed with the back tilted up, windows on either side, in one of those white hospital gowns and flashing his big beaming smile as I entered the room. An aide brought me in, sat me down, and left. So there were just the two of us, Eisenhower and myself. What I thought was going to be a courtesy meeting became an extensive briefing on USIA, its history, its vital mission, its usefulness. I was astonished!

He said, “You know, I haven't felt it was appropriate for me to involve myself in the last two presidencies (those, of course, being Kennedy and Johnson), because of the party difference.” He continued, “You're going into one of the most important jobs in the entire United States Government.” Then he talked about the Agency for perhaps two hours. It simply stunned me that a president knew so much about one agency. Later I realized that his interest in USIA was very, very special.

So that small incident may be the end of the story of Eisenhower and USIA. It doesn't have the substance of other things you have heard tonight, but it's interesting because it shows how he wanted to vet the USIA director in the new administration and give him the direct benefit of his own experience and thoughts.

A little anecdote. As you know, Nixon had decided to have Henry Kissinger as NSC director, and Kissinger had decided to reduce formal NSC membership to five people. The USIA director would only attend on an ad hoc basis. In my conversation with Eisenhower, he mentioned something about NSC meetings. I said, “Mr. President, I may not be at all NSC meetings. I will attend only by invitation.”

He said, “No, no, no, no, no. You will be a member.”

I said, “I believe the incoming NSC director has changed that.”

Well, at that time it wasn't public about Henry [Kissinger]. Eisenhower said, “Who's the new NSC director?”

I said, “Henry Kissinger. It will be announced in a few days.”

He stopped and said, “But Kissinger is a professor!” [General laughter] He continued as if I wasn't in the room. “You ask professors to study things, but you never put them in charge of anything.” [General laughter] “I have to call Dick [Nixon]. I'm going to call Dick about that.”

In closing, I thought you might like to know that this wise man who created USIA was still trying to help and guide its people from a sick bed sixty days before he died.

Thank you.

WASHBURN: Thank you, Frank.

What a wealth of stuff for the library out in Abilene! Jim Keogh now has some thoughts about his relations with Ike.

Comment by James Keogh

My memory goes back earlier to 1955. I was then a writer and editor at Time magazine. We had been very much involved in the whole Eisenhower process, had pushed him for president. After he was elected, we were a little worried. Was this going to work? We didn't really decide so until 1955. For the cover of Time that would be on the stands the Fourth of July 1955, we decided to do the success cover. “This administration is working.” I was the writer on the story.

I came down to Washington to see the president. I went into the Oval Office, just Jim Hagerty, the president, and myself. We sat and talked for about an hour. I remember now, tonight, two of the questions I asked. The first one relates to the man: “Mr. President, they are saying that you have turned the country around. What do you have to say to that?”

His answer was, “No man can turn this country around. If the country has turned around, it's the people who have done it.”

Another question I remember was, “Mr. President, domestic policy now, there seems to be a strong consensus that it's working. But the foreign policy situation, all of those questions are out there. We have this tremendous confrontation. What are the keys to the solution of this enormous problem?”

I remember part of his answer to that, and it stuck with me all the time since then. “One of the most important things we must do,” he said, “is communicate to the people of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe what this country is about, who we are, what we have, what we do, how we feel, what we can do.” And I've never forgotten that particular answer, because I think it relates very closely to what all of us have tried to do over the years.

One further note, Abbott. I think you ought to see to it that all of the current and future directors, deputy director, and leaders of USIA have a tape of this session tonight, so that they can have the benefit of this history and of the memories that we are hearing.

Thank you.

WASHBURN: Thank you, Jim. We are going to do exactly that. We made an audiotape. It will be edited. Tom Tuch has agreed to undertake the project. We will have it in print and get it to the libraries around the country and to the present and future operators of the agency. What you have said, Jim, fits very well into what Arthur Larson sent me to read to

all of you, because he couldn't be here. I won't read it all, but you will see how it confirms what was said here by you and Frank and Henry.

Letter from Arthur Larson

“Eisenhower's conviction of the Agency's importance is best reflected in his insistence that it must be a separate agency. Not only that, but its directors should have the equivalent of cabinet rank so that he can deal with the secretary of state on an equal plane, not as a subordinate.

“Another indication of Eisenhower's belief in the Agency's importance is the fact that shortly after my appointment, he asked me to take a half-hour to make a presentation to the Cabinet on the USIA's work. The members were greatly impressed and moved by heart-rending scenes in smuggled-out films from the Hungarian revolution.

“As to message and tone, Eisenhower said my number-one job was to ease tensions with the USSR. He particularly wanted to reach the young people. I find this note in my pocketbook quote: 'Offer unlimited access to America in exchange for same as to publications, visitors, cultural, broadcasters, etc.'

“Above all, USIA must stick to the truth. Its tone must be positive, not just anti-communist. This may sound self-evident to the point of triteness now, but it definitely was not so then. In view of the events of the past year, one is entitled to conclude that he was more than thirty years ahead of his time.”

LINCOLN: As president of the Alumni Association, I can only say thank you immensely, Abbott, and thanks to everyone else who has been on the program here for your contribution to the knowledge about the whys and wherefores and the reason for being of the U.S. Information Agency. Thank you all and goodnight.

End of interview